



women's aid  
until women & children are safe

# MAKING CHILDREN VISIBLE

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A **good practice guide** from Women's Aid specialist services for **children** and **young people**

## Produced by

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## Published by

**Women's Aid Federation of England**, a  
registered charity in England & Wales (1054154)  
and a company limited by guarantee in England  
& Wales (3171880)  
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# Acknowledgements

## Our member services

Women's Aid Federation of England would like to say a huge thank you to our member services, who not only gave their time to attend meetings and contributed to the formation of this guide, but were fully invested in the importance of the need to do things differently in order to protect children and young people from domestic abuse.

**Cambridge Women's Aid**  
**Crossroads Derbyshire**  
**Darlington Family Help**  
**South Liverpool Domestic Abuse Services**  
**Haven Sheffield**  
**Hull Women's Aid**  
**Jewish Women's Aid**  
**South Liverpool Domestic Abuse Services**  
**The Wish Centre**  
**Trafford Domestic Abuse**

We also appreciate the valued contributions from **Saheli**, **Humraaz** and **West Mercia Women's Aid**. Additional thanks to Lucy Hadley, Sophie Francis-Cansfield, Susie Marwood, Angharad Reynolds, Sarah Davidge, Rehaila Sharif, Josie Austin, Annie Reeve and Sarika Seshadri for their support.

Women's Aid is the national charity working to end domestic abuse against women and children. Over the past 47 years, Women's Aid has been at the forefront of shaping and coordinating responses to domestic abuse through practice, research and policy. We empower survivors by keeping their voices at the heart of our work, working with and for women and children by listening to them and responding to their needs.

We are a federation of over 170 organisations which provide just under 300 local lifesaving services to women and children across the country. We provide expert training, qualifications and consultancy to a range of agencies and professionals working with survivors or commissioning domestic abuse services, and award a National Quality Mark for services which meet our quality standards. We hold the largest national data set on domestic abuse, and use research and evidence to inform all of our work. Our campaigns achieve change in policy, practice and awareness, encouraging healthy relationships and helping to build a future where domestic abuse is no longer tolerated.

Our support services, which include our Live Chat Helpline, the Survivors' Forum, the No Woman Turned Away Project, the Survivor's Handbook, Love Respect (our dedicated website for young people in their first relationships), the national Domestic Abuse Directory and our advocacy projects, help thousands of women and children every year.

# Foreword

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For far too long we have not done enough to centre our approaches on the impact of domestic abuse on children and young people or the essential life-saving services provided by our specialist domestic abuse organisations for children and young people, particularly our key children's workers.

This good practice guide provides a brief insight into the incredible work our member services are engaged in, and the impact it has on children's and young people's lives. It's a celebration of the immense work and commitment to not only safeguard children impacted by domestic violence, but also to enable them to thrive.

There are some critical key recommendations proposed in this guide which are vital, perhaps now more than ever before, for commissioners to be proactive and deliberate in their commitment and decisions to ensure every child has the support they need at the time they need it.

There's a clear message from our specialist services around the challenges they face in the constant churn of funding and resources, and balancing this with what they know works to provide the support necessary for the children they are working with. The needs of children urgently need to be addressed; we must not focus on risk alone, ignoring the wider impact of living with domestic abuse in families where risk would be deemed low.

The work of Women's Aid, alongside that of many other organisations, has been pivotal in ensuring the Domestic Abuse Act focused on children and young people as survivors in their own right and not simply as passive bystanders.

I offer my heartfelt thanks to our member services for engaging in this guide and sharing their best practice in order to improve the commissioning processes that have such a profound impact on the lives of children and young people experiencing domestic abuse.

**Farah Nazeer**  
**Chief Executive, Women's Aid**



# Introduction

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## Who is the guide aimed at?

This report was produced in collaboration with a number of our local Women's Aid member services. We have created this best practice guide to specifically showcase the expertise, knowledge, and importance of specialist domestic abuse services and the role they play in protecting and supporting children and young people.

We also wanted to highlight many of the challenges our specialist organisations face in providing services, from accommodation-based provision and outreach work in the community, to counselling and group work. In this guide, we have made a set of recommendations to make changes to funding practices which recognise the role specialist services play to support children and young people.

This guide is useful for any professional working on the issue of domestic abuse, but specifically all statutory commissioners, including police and crime commissioners, clinical commissioning groups and local authorities. More importantly, this best practice guide is an opportunity to centre children as survivors of domestic abuse and in need of specialised services that can cater to their needs and save lives.

## Why is action needed?

Since we started this work, we have seen a world pandemic that has affected each of us in some capacity. Lockdowns and restrictions on movement have created more difficulty for those living in fear at home. We know that for many women and children home is the

least safe place to be. School closures and the instability caused by the pandemic have meant that children and young people (CYP) have, for long stretches of time, been at home for most of the day.

Where previously schools have played a vital role in safeguarding CYP, lockdowns and school closures created a vacuum of support for vulnerable children, until government guidance caught up with the impact of the lockdown on many families.

Closure of schools means that access to support is limited for those CYP who may already be receiving it, but it also raises concerns that teachers aren't able to see changes in behaviour in children in the same way that they can when children are physically in school.

We saw a 25% increase in domestic abuse at the start of the first national lockdown,<sup>1</sup> with the Office for National Statistics (ONS) recording more than a quarter of a million domestic abuse related reports, showing an increase of 7% from the year before and an 18% increase from two years ago.<sup>2</sup>

Women's Aid's report 'A Perfect Storm' (2020) shows that during the pandemic children more commonly witness domestic abuse directed towards their mother and experience abusive behaviour directed at themselves. According to 'A Perfect Storm', more than half the women surveyed during the first national lockdown reported that their children had witnessed more abuse towards them, and over one third reported an increase in abusive behaviours directed at children.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [www.refuge.org.uk/25-increase-in-calls-to-national-domestic-abuse-helpline-since-lockdown-measures-began/](https://www.refuge.org.uk/25-increase-in-calls-to-national-domestic-abuse-helpline-since-lockdown-measures-began/)

<sup>2</sup> <https://news.sky.com/story/one-in-five-crimes-during-lockdown-were-domestic-abuse-related-figures-show-12141888>

<sup>3</sup> Women's Aid. (2020) A Perfect Storm: The Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Domestic Abuse Survivors and the Services Supporting Them. Bristol: Women's Aid.

Barriers that mothers face when trying to leave abusers and access support, in turn mean that children and young people are unable to escape. In addition to the barriers created by the pandemic, Women's Aid's report 'Nowhere to Turn for Children and Young People' (2020) highlights how many families with children face intersecting structural inequalities in their search for a safe space to live. For example, the report documents that of those supported by Women's Aid's No Women Turned Away Project, a project which offers additional support to women and families struggling to find suitable refuge accommodation, almost half (43.2%) were from Black and minoritised backgrounds.

Our specialist member services provide essential support to children's services and formal child protection meetings and measures. Their contribution is vital through partnership with local authorities to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children, which is frequently not understood in the nuanced way that specialists understand it. They provide expertise and additional ways in which children can be protected.

We have seen that for a long time, children have been silenced and ignored when it comes to domestic abuse. The general narrative has been around the adult survivor and adult perpetrator, with children merely being witnesses to the abuse, or indirectly impacted.

The coercion and violence experienced at home between two adults, whether directly or indirectly inflicted on children, has a great impact on children's lives and wellbeing. It is vital that we ensure that children's experiences are reflected, and that services are provided with the funding to be able to provide the support children need in a timely manner.

This is why at Women's Aid we recognise that children are survivors of domestic abuse in their own right, and welcome the same recognition in the new Domestic Abuse Act.

## Why do we work with children?

It is a huge misconception that children and young people are not harmed by domestic abuse occurring at home. More recent academic evidence and frontline experience demonstrates that living with domestic abuse has significant impacts on children and young people, highlighting the need for improved resources and funding for specialist services.

We know that the most common factor in cases where children are at risk of serious harm in the UK is domestic abuse.<sup>4</sup> This, however, doesn't take into account children who are living in a home where domestic abuse is taking place, but where children are not deemed 'high risk'.

One in seven (14.2%) children and young people under the age of 18 will have lived with domestic violence at some point in their childhood.<sup>5</sup>

In the financial year 2019-20, 62.5% of women in refuge services had children and 8.3% were pregnant. Children are accessing services which are often unfunded to provide support to children directly. These are missed opportunities to offer specialist services the resources to do this vital work that we know is life changing for children.<sup>6</sup>

We know that the long-term benefits of working with children's trauma early can have a significant impact on their wellbeing. Yet the number of children in England experiencing domestic abuse at home does not measure up with the type of support needed that is available across the country.

Women's Aid's report 'Nowhere to Turn for Children and Young People' (2020) shows that almost 40% (39.4%) of community-based domestic abuse services in England are unable to offer a dedicated service for children and young people (this finding is based on Routes to Support

<sup>4</sup> Ofsted, HMICFRS, CQC, HMIP, 'The multiagency response to children living with domestic abuse', 2017 referenced in the DA bill response document ref 23: <https://www.womensaid.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Women27s-Aid-Briefing-for-Domestic-Abuse-Bill-Report-Stage-and-Third-Reading.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Radford, L., Aitken, R., Miller, P., Ellis, J., Roberts, J., and Firkic, A. (2011) Meeting the needs of children living with domestic violence in London Research report. London: NSPCC and Refuge, p. 9

<sup>6</sup> Women's Aid (2021) The Domestic Abuse Report 2021: The Annual Audit, Bristol: Women's Aid. Out of 3,348 service users who accessed a refuge and who were supported by one of the over 60 organisations running domestic abuse services in England and using On Track during 2019-2020

snapshot data from 1st May 2020). In some areas there is extensive work funded and provided, and in others it is barely existent.

In a recent Women's Aid Federation of England survey on the impact of Covid-19 on specialist service providers, 60% stated that they had to reduce or cancel their service provision for children.

## Concerns voiced by services

Specialist domestic abuse services highlighted a number of issues and concerns that often placed pressure on their services, and prevented them from being able to do the work they needed to do effectively.

This good practice guide sits in the wider context of a funding crisis that has impacted specialist domestic abuse services for a long time. This has included years of seeing their budgets reduced or taken away completely, as well as problematic commissioning practices that have not understood the expertise or need for their work with children and young people.

There have been a number of issues raised in the way that services have been commissioned or funded. These have included:

- ▶ Provision of short-term funding, with small amounts of money to deal with complex issues, which leads to projects developing as they come to an end and impacting work being done with children.
- ▶ Funding pots for support services not reflecting the core needs of children.
- ▶ Constant requirement for innovation and new ideas. These are welcomed, however life-saving provision that is effective and working should not be pressured to reinvent itself.
- ▶ Huge waiting lists for children, with a specific focus on 'high risk' children. This is understandable, but often dismisses children living in abusive homes which aren't categorised as 'high risk'.
- ▶ Referrals often focused on children seen to be 'acting out', whilst ignoring those who maybe dealing with trauma in different ways.
- ▶ Little focus or prioritisation on early intervention.
- ▶ A need for more holistic approaches to parenting programmes for non-abusive parents to rebuild and strengthen the child and mother's relationship.
- ▶ Outcomes expected are often measured by rapid turnover of children through services, and not by the quality of the work and the impact on an individual child's life.
- ▶ Huge uncertainties and anxieties for staff and survivors about service continuation and funding for refuge provision, particularly during Covid-19.
- ▶ A constant need to produce evidence on why it is important to be supporting children and providing specialist support even though domestic abuse is a primary contributor in cases of child protection orders.
- ▶ Gaps in funding for children's provision in different parts of the country. Only 32.3% of refuges employ a dedicated children and young people's worker (Routes to Support 2020).
- ▶ Lack of recognition for the cost saving that specialist services provide to local authorities. Many services provide this information but is often not recognised, and there is also a lack of acknowledgement that in specialist provision a lot of unfunded work is done to support children accessing their services through an adult survivor.
- ▶ The sector is consistently dependent on other funding sources due to shortfall from Local Authorities. Although services appreciate that having diversified income generation is good practice, the need to source other funding for core services that local authorities refer into creates huge barriers for smaller organisations and services.
- ▶ Many services question whether they are solving the issues children and young people are facing or simply tick-boxing for funding providers.
- ▶ A need for increased prioritisation of connecting services in a local area to coordinate the work and relationships to provide better services and plug gaps.

# Recommendations

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## Improving outcomes for children and young people

The Domestic Abuse Act includes a statutory definition of domestic abuse, which explicitly recognises that a child who sees or hears, or experiences the effects of domestic abuse is also a victim.

To make a real difference, the law must be underpinned with significant reform to the statutory and specialist response to children and young people experiencing domestic abuse.

Work with our specialist members has identified eight recommendations to improve outcomes for children and young people who are living with or have lived with domestic abuse:

1. In their time of need, all children should have access to professionals in statutory and non-statutory services. The new definition of domestic abuse in the Act should be backed with national funding for training within statutory children's services, delivered by specialist domestic abuse organisations.
  2. There must be recognition of the long-term impact that domestic abuse has on CYP, and the need for an increased emphasis on safety, quality and expertise of services provided to support them.
  3. This must go hand in hand with increased recognition of the benefits of specialist support services, refuges, outreach work, prevention work in schools, and local communities in both challenging and changing cultures.
  4. Whilst the Domestic Abuse Act contains an important legal duty on local authorities to deliver support to survivors of domestic abuse in accommodation-based services, we're clear that this must be underpinned by the funding of life-saving support services needed to support all survivors and their children. This requires a commitment to invest £393m annually for specialist domestic abuse services, including £173m to ensure the national network of refuge services is sustainable, safe and can meet the needs of all survivors and their children. This must be delivered alongside ring-fenced funding for specialist services led 'by and for' Black and minoritised women, d/Deaf and disabled survivors and LGBT+ survivors.
  5. Within both national and local funding arrangements, the needs of CYP must be considered as a central part of funding for domestic abuse services, to ensure funding for children is not an 'optional extra' but integrated as a core part of service delivery.
  6. Within funding and commissioning arrangements, there must be trust in the expertise of specialist organisations to use funding in the best way that reflects the needs of CYP they are supporting.
  7. It is crucial that funding covers a project or organisation in full to ensure that expectations are realistic, rather than the current siloed approach where small amounts of funding are provided for large amounts of workers.
  8. Dedicated funding is needed to ensure there are trained front-line workers in the specialist sector with Continuing Professional Development (CPD) value, as well as funding for specialist services to deliver training to statutory and non-statutory staff on domestic abuse.
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# Good practice examples

Examples of good practice from member services

## Cambridge Women's Aid

*Sophie Meuwissen*

Cambridge Women's Aid provides dedicated and specialist services to women and children affected by domestic abuse. We offer a free and confidential community-based outreach service and safe refuge for women in Cambridge city, South and East Cambridgeshire.

### Intervention: Art therapy

When children arrive at the refuge, it is important that we are able to use art and play to start therapeutic work with them and meet their emotional needs. An important part of how we do this is through our daily art room sessions. Our art room is open twice a day: an hour in the morning for pre-school aged children; and an hour after school for older children. It gives children a safe space of their own, where they can explore, express themselves, and process their thoughts, emotions, and memories. It is also a vital opportunity for support workers to build trusting relationships with both mothers and their children. Women can be encouraged and supported in their parenting skills, raising their confidence and self-esteem, and there is also time to get to understand a child's behaviour; whether they are showing signs of trauma, or coping with additional needs.

Over time, children are able to make more eye contact, play together, and even feel confident enough to say things about how they are feeling that they might find hard to say in front of their mum. It is also dedicated time for just being a kid and having fun, with no pressure.

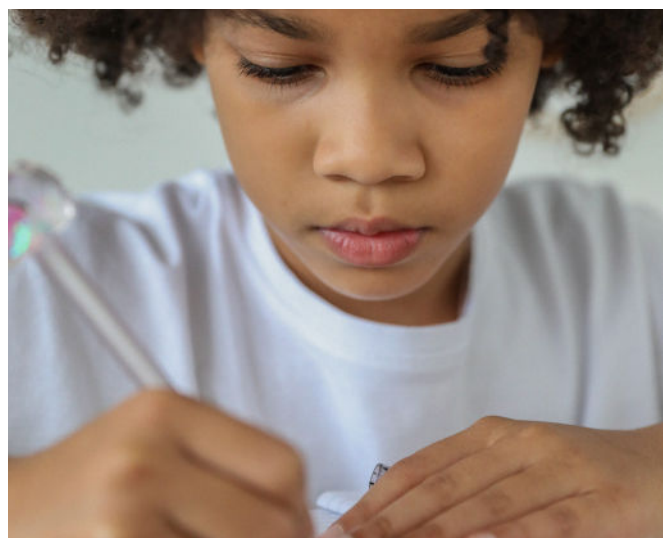
We would like to have the resources to build on this even further by having more dedicated time to progress one-to-one therapeutic work on the trauma that many of the children come in with.

### Why has it worked?

Important spaces within the refuge like the art room and garden provide opportunities for relationship building, and experienced staff are able to gauge how and when to build up to therapeutic work.

In the first half of 2019, we recorded the following improvements over the course of time that children stayed in the refuge:

- ▶ 69% of children became happier and more confident.
- ▶ 49% of children saw an improved relationship with mum.
- ▶ 51% were eating better.
- ▶ 49% were sleeping better.
- ▶ 51% were more settled in school or nursery.



## Hull Women's Aid Children and Young People's Support Service

*Michelle Donnelly*

Hull Women's Aid provides specialist support to children and young people aged 0-19 who are living with or have experienced domestic abuse. The service delivers support to children living in the refuge and on an outreach basis, as well as safety programmes and preventative work in schools.

### Intervention: Specialist safety programme

#### ***Safety. Trust. Openness. Protect (STOP)***

S.T.O.P is designed to educate children and young people on keeping themselves safe. The 10-week programme involves promoting education and community approaches to prevention and early intervention.

It includes age appropriate sessions on healthy relationships which enable individuals to explore and resolve issues they have in relation to domestic abuse, and recognise that violence is never acceptable.

It is also designed to help children and young people deal with their emotions safely, and help them to understand unsafe/safe choices and the impact it has on themselves and others. Some sessions also involve home work to help build relationships within the family unit.

### Why has it worked?

The organisation provides both accommodation (refuge) provision as well as outreach services. Each of these is important in supporting children and women experiencing domestic abuse.

Children and young people living in the refuge, will be supported by the children's practitioners to maintain stability and security. Everyone gets a welcome pack when they arrive and we will go through health and safety with each child or young person. They are provided with emotional one-to-one support and we facilitate learning by providing help and encouragement for them to attend local schools, and/or create a temporary learning environment.

Hull Women's Aid has developed holistic support methodology for outreach support in the community to meet the needs of individuals in crisis, through to living safe, independent and fulfilling lives. The service provides emotional support, through one-to-one sessions and sibling group sessions as well as child focus group sessions and family group sessions. Safety planning is also completed with each child/young person enabling them to understand the importance of personal safety and keeping safe.

Over the years the programme has been highly successful in helping children and young people overcome their experiences of domestic abuse.



I feel better now I have had help with my anger because I don't hurt my mum, the work we did about the tree helped because I could see that my relationship with my mum grew and grew. It's like someone has switched a light bulb on in my life to make it better.

**Boy aged 13**

HULL WOMEN'S AID

## South Liverpool Domestic Abuse Services

*Naomi Frisch*

Since 1998, South Liverpool Domestic Abuse Services (SLDAS) has had three interrelated strands of community-based activity: a range of frontline services for women who have experienced abuse in the home; a programme of volunteering that includes bespoke accredited training plus work experience; and delivery of domestic abuse awareness to a range of professional, voluntary and community organisations, groups and individuals whose understanding impacts on the quality of life for survivors of abuse.

### Intervention: #YouthTalk

The SLDAS programme #YouthTalk (#YT) for young people grew out of the tragic murder of a young mother who was 15 years old. Services had not supported her to be able to reveal the full extent of her dangerous situation. The findings of a serious case review indicated that groups and services able to meet the needs of adults could not be relied on as suitable support for young people.

#YouthTalk aims to:

- ▶ Raise awareness of domestic abuse to enable young people to make informed choices about current or future relationships.
- ▶ Raise awareness of other issues facing young people such as child sexual exploitation (CSE), social media dangers, understanding emotions, self-esteem, negotiation skills and conflict resolution.
- ▶ Provide a relevant and specific support service for young people.

### Why does it work?

The goal of #YouthTalk has been to help children process their experiences of domestic violence/abuse and give them a safe place to do this where they can talk confidentially with other young people who have had similar experiences. Naming this experience as abuse allowed young people to explore their emotions and feelings about their experiences.

Many young people have expressed anger, fear and anxiety about what they have been through. #YouthTalk has assisted their understanding of these feelings, and it helped to make sense of their own attitudes towards violence and abuse. This genuinely does help them to change, and make better life choices for themselves in future.

#YouthTalk has offered a resource to agencies like schools, social services, youth organisations and to parents, especially mums/siblings experiencing violence from their children or who support young people facing bullying and harassment.

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The goal of **#YouthTalk** has been to help children process their experiences of domestic violence/abuse and give them a **safe place** to do this where they can talk confidentially with other young people who have had similar experiences.



## Jewish Women's Aid

*Anat Rosenwaks*

Jewish Women's Aid (JWA) is a registered national charity for Jewish women and their children affected by domestic abuse. We have been offering support to women and children in the community affected by domestic abuse since 1985.

### Intervention: Specialist children's therapy service

Our specialist therapy service supports children of our clients after parents have separated.

#### The children's therapist works to improve:

- ▶ children's mental and emotional health;
- ▶ children's confidence and self-esteem;
- ▶ children's attendance and enjoyment at school;
- ▶ family functioning;
- ▶ stability;
- ▶ resilience; and
- ▶ improving relationships with their peers.

#### The children's therapist aims to reduce:

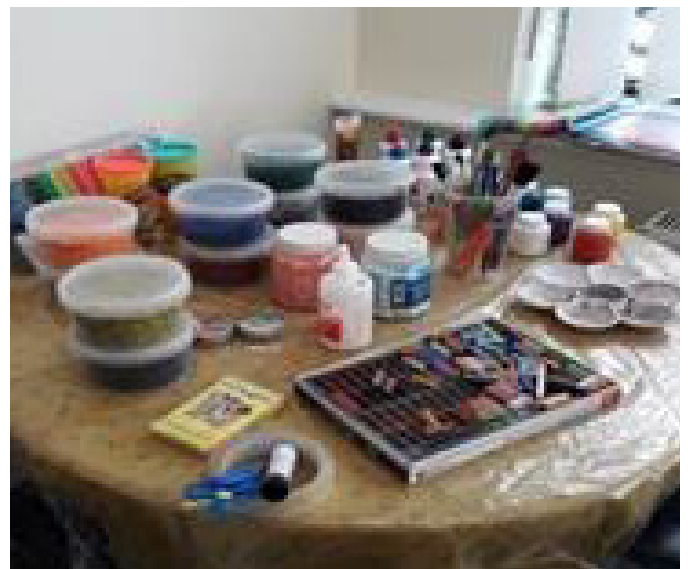
- ▶ their sense of isolation during a very difficult period of their lives; and
- ▶ the risk of neglect, maltreatment or violence

### Why has it worked?

Our therapists (qualified child psychotherapists/ play therapists) initially meet with the parent or carer for an assessment consisting of an overview of the issues and current situation of the children's life, and offer therapy. Our children's therapists work with children in schools or at our offices.

The sessions are child-led and explore the child's feelings in relation to their experiences of domestic abuse through a variety of therapeutic methods such as art, talking, writing and play, to help the children express their feelings and come to terms with the violence and abuse in their lives. They can also offer advice and support to school staff around managing issues that arise in the classroom and how to support children who have experienced domestic violence.

The therapists are able to work with the children to help them to understand that the abuse is not their fault, and throughout the therapy they aim to increase resilience and the ability to build relationships now and in the future. Our children's therapists use tools which track the child's progress and an individual support plan is devised for each of the children in the service.



## Darlington Family Help

*Carole Clarkson*

Darlington Family Help is a local, independent charity founded in 1976 to provide safe, temporary accommodation for women and children fleeing domestic abuse. Darlington Family Help runs a confidential helpline which is available for anyone directly or indirectly impacted by domestic abuse, providing advocacy, options, information, and signposting, alongside move-on support for clients who have moved out of the refuge and into new tenancies within Darlington.

From April 2019 to February 2020, 80 children stayed at the refuge and were supported by our staff and services. The length of stay at the refuge can fluctuate depending on individual women's circumstances and choices, but our local authority housing related contract states a six month stay (we have eight units only).

### Why does it work?

Although therapeutic work with children and young people in refuge goes unfunded, it is still a responsibility to look after the needs of children and women who access our refuge provision at the most difficult point in their lives.

Our children's workers provide play opportunities and activities which have made a considerable difference to making refuge feel safer to be in. These activities build bonds with other children in similar situations and staff who understand what they are experiencing.

It also provides opportunities for their mothers to access support services and work on their progress and how to move forward, whilst knowing their children are being taken care of.

### Intervention: Children's services in refuge provision

Children and young people make up two thirds of the refuge population, so it is essential that their needs should be met.

Providing children's support services in refuges is a difficult job, as it requires the ability to work with an ever-changing number of children of different ages and backgrounds. In this work, we also ensure that we involve mothers in some activities to support the rebuilding of relationships that have often been broken due to the abuse they have experienced. Our experienced staff support mothers with any additional parenting skills they may need.

Family Help doesn't receive local authority funding for our support work with children and young people. Over the many years we have continued to submit multiple funding bids to grant funders. This can be an administrative burden, but essential to our support work. Having short-term funding streams makes it difficult to plan for the future.



"While staying at the refuge I have been able to share my experiences and **talk through my anxieties** with some of the other children who are also living here, I also talked to the workers about what I had seen and heard when I was living at home"

## Trafford Domestic Abuse Services (TDAS)

*Amy Moss*

Trafford Domestic Abuse Services (TDAS) is a local charity offering support to adults and children who have experienced or been effected by domestic abuse in the borough of Trafford, Greater Manchester.

We are passionate about our children and young people service and now offer an extensive support package to those aged 5-18 years old (extended to 25 for those with complex or additional needs) who have experienced domestic abuse.

Children are asked to rate themselves on entry and exit around our main outcomes: reducing isolation; readiness to share feelings; safety awareness; family relationships; and feeling happy.

### Why does it work?

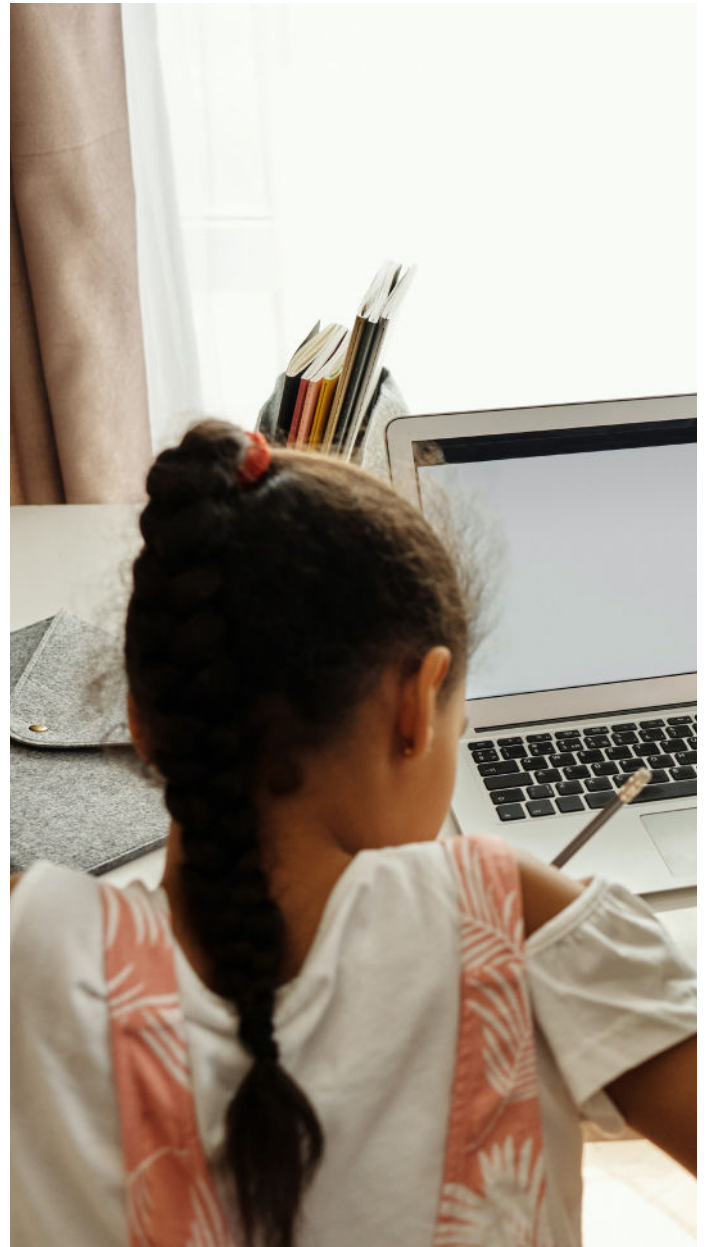
R'SPACE® offers children and young people who have lived through domestic abuse a safe place to explore their feelings, learn coping strategies for the future and meet other young people who have had similar experiences. The group helps children to realise they are not alone and we often see children open up amongst peers about their own experiences, and feel a great relief by doing so.

### Intervention: R'Space®

Our R'SPACE® programme was written by domestic abuse specialists in consultation with children and young people.

R'SPACE® is a seven-week group support programme for children and young people who have lived through domestic abuse. Our R'SPACE® programme is accessible for children and young people aged between five and 14 years living or going to school in Trafford. Groups are delivered in three age groups; 5-7, 8-11, 12-14. The programme consists of group sessions with one of our specialist children and young people's support workers and volunteers. Each session runs weekly for one-and-a-half hours and every session is based on a particular topic around the effects of domestic abuse on children and young people: feelings; family and relationships; self-esteem; worries; anger; safety planning; understanding domestic abuse; and responsibility.

We use a range of group and individual activities to explore the topics and adapt the sessions with age-appropriate content for every age group.





## The Wish Centre

*Alison Partington*

The WISH Centre is a specialist domestic abuse service, based in Blackburn with Darwen and Lancashire. The WISH Centre offers extensive therapeutic support to children and young people.

### Intervention: Young people's programmes

Alongside holistic support for families who have experienced domestic abuse, including those staying in refuge, The WISH centre delivers age-appropriate group and 1:1 therapeutic and educational intervention programmes with children and young people aged six to 17 years old. The programmes are open to children and young people who may have experienced domestic abuse within their own families and/or their own relationships, and there is also a specialist programme for young people who are harming others.



### Why does it work?

- ▶ Experienced, knowledgeable and enthusiastic workers: The programmes have been developed by experienced workers over the last 15 years, making use of both specialist and widely available resources but also making regular adaptations to stay up to date with evolving issues. We try to make the sessions interesting, useful and fun.
- ▶ Consistency: We keep the referral process and programme titles consistent, despite changes in funders. This ensures that local professionals and families are aware of the service and are confident to refer. The service has become well respected and truly embedded in Blackburn with Darwen's referral pathway with referrals received from social care, schools, healthcare, youth workers, IDVAs, family members and self-referrals.
- ▶ Personalisation: We recognise that children and young people are individuals and have different needs regarding support around domestic abuse. Therefore care is always taken to listen to the voice of the child/young person and the sessions are very much influenced by their wishes and needs. As such The WISH centre has achieved Investors In Children accreditation.

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“I have **learnt** what to do in a bad situation and know what to do if I am upset” – H aged 13

## Crossroads Derbyshire

*Sharon Snape*

Crossroads Derbyshire is a registered charity dedicated to helping women, men and children break free from domestic abuse. Crossroads Derbyshire covers the High Peak and Derbyshire Dales, a largely rural area with only a small number of towns where any services are available.

Our minibus has allowed us to pick up children based in refuge and take them out for trips. It has offered our residents opportunities for leisure and learning. It has allowed us to move families and their pets/belongings from their homes to places of safety. It has enabled us to deliver Christmas presents to our most isolated children, as well as food parcels and furniture. The minibus has helped to make domestic abuse support in High Peak and Derbyshire Dales responsive to our children and young people's needs, and made domestic abuse services accessible to families who would otherwise not be able to access any support because of their rurality or lack of transport.

The parent of a boy who was able to attend a group programme told us that the transport was a 'godsend' – being able to attend a children's group for 12 weeks had given her son some confidence, helped him to make some friends for the first time, and helped him to understand that domestic abuse was not his fault and he was not the only one to feel the way he did. His mum subsequently accessed Freedom, because we could take her to the venue.

### Intervention: Minibus

Derbyshire is a county covering 1000 square miles, which means that any children's support or client appointments rely on workers travelling out to meet people in the community. We work as part of a specialist domestic abuse consortium, with two other providers, to ensure county-wide coverage of all services. This is funded by Derbyshire County Council, fundraising and charitable grants.

### Why does it work?

Our geography has meant that meeting the needs of children and young people has often been challenging – many are isolated with very poor transport opportunities to access support. Schools are often many miles apart, meaning that organising groupwork is hampered by long distances between children and venues. In 2018, we launched a fundraising drive to raise the money to buy a minibus. We were able to buy a small 8-seater minibus. This has enabled us to make our service fit our children's needs and break down many of the barriers of living in rural communities. We use this bus to pick up children from schools and take them to group work settings. We then drop them back home. We offer the same service to women wanting to access to our Freedom group or needing transport to appointments or court.



## Haven Sheffield

*Sarah Midgley*

Haven was established over 40 years ago in Sheffield, South Yorkshire, as an independent charity delivering refuge support for women and their children. From 2015 Haven stopped providing refuge services and has developed to become an established provider of specialist community-based prevention, crisis intervention and recovery based domestic abuse support services for children and young people aged 0–25 years old, and their wider family.

### Trauma-led services

Haven offers a range of needs-led, trauma-informed services. We develop bespoke programmes that respond to the needs of the individual child and recognise the impact of abuse and the challenges this places on the children and young people's ability to engage and recover. Our specialist services include group work, 1:1 sessions, therapeutic support and training for professionals. Haven is continually innovating and responding to need. Over recent months we have adapted to offer a wider range of approaches and found solutions to connect with children and young people in ways that are accessible and child-centred.

***In the year up to 31st October 2020 we worked with a total of 2,869 children and young people and their families.***

- ▶ 90% of parents/carers agreed that working with Haven had a positive impact on their child.
- ▶ 86% of children and young people agreed they knew more about how to stay safe.

One of Haven's most well-established and respected services, is the CandYP (Children and Young People) programme. CandYP is underpinned by the doctoral research carried out by a former manager at Haven named Jean Kidner.

CandYP is the foremost therapeutic programme used in Sheffield to support relationship-building between child and parent after domestic abuse. The CandYP programme consists of six sessions with the child(ren) and their safe parent or carer.

The work focuses on rebuilding the child-parent/carer relationship and developing the child's confidence in being able to discuss their emotions and feelings.

Through working with one of our specialist practitioners, the parent/carer and child complete activities together which strengthen their bond, help them to communicate and allow the child to explore any feelings relating to the abuse in a safe way. They will also develop a range of techniques to help manage emotions. At the end of the process, families are given a compilation of the activities they have completed, to demonstrate the journey they have been on together.

CandYP is a programme known and trusted by other professionals supporting children and young people, and feedback from the families is overwhelmingly positive. Children and young people say they feel safer, happier, and able to talk to their significant adult better.

In the year up to 31st October 2020:

- ▶ 91% of parents agreed that CandYP had a positive impact on the parent/child relationship.

Parents often feed back that the work has increased their understanding of their child's behaviour and the motivating/influencing factors. During a visit from a practitioner to discuss the progress made, one mum said she felt that her increased knowledge meant she was able to have a restorative conversation after "a wobble", and also knew how to identify times her child may feel triggered, so she could help de-escalate. Overall, she felt they had developed a more loving and secure relationship.

“

**“My life is better  
because I don't argue  
as much anymore”**





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